

Message Text

SECRET

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ORIGIN PM-04

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 EA-07 AF-10
EUR-12 ACDA-07 NSC-05 DODE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
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DRAFTED BY PM/DCA:MARIETTI
APPROVED BY PM:RBARTHOLOMEW
P:DTICE
S/P:TMORAN
NEA:ADUBS
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EUR/SOV:WKUSHLIS
ACDA:JTWOMBLY - NSC -G.SICK
DOD:TGORMAN - S/S:SESTEINER
-----210329Z 117630 /62
O 210204Z MAY 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 117386

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: XO, PARM

SUBJECT: INDIAN OCEAN ARMS CONTROL

REF: (A) STATE 105734, (B) NEW DELHI 6721

1. DURING THE AMBASSADOR'S PRE-DEPARTURE DISCUSSIONS IN WASHINGTON, IT WAS AGREED THAT HE WOULD APPROACH THE INDIANS SOON AFTER HIS ARRIVAL TO DISCUSS THE US INITIATIVE WITH THE SOVIETS ON INDIAN OCEAN ARMS LIMITATIONS. US WILL BE APPROACHING UK AND FRANCE MAY 24-26 AND DEPARTMENT SUGGESTS THIS MIGHT BE APPROPRIATE TIME FRAME TO RAISE ISSUE WITH
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GOI. HOWEVER, DEPARTMENT DEFERS TO EMBASSY'S JUDGMENT ON TIMING.

2. AMBASSADOR CAN DRAW ON THE FOLLOWING IN DISCUSSING THIS ISSUE WITH THE GOI:

IT HAS LONG BEEN THE US POSITION THAT WE WISH TO AVOID A

COMPETITIVE ARMS RACE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. WE HAVE BEEN EXERCISING RESTRAINT IN OUR MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA.

3. RECENTLY, PRESIDENT CARTER HAS REITERATED OUR INTEREST IN AVOIDING AN ARMS RACE AND EXPRESSED US WILLINGNESS TO MOVE TOWARDS THE DEMILITARIZATION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN. WE HAVE APPROACHED THE SOVIET UNION TO SEE IF THEY ARE READY TO COOPERATE WITH US IN REACHING A BILATERAL AGREEMENT ON MILITARY RESTRAINT IN THE AREA. DURING SECRETARY VANCE'S TRIP TO MOSCOW IN MARCH, THE US PROPOSED AND THE SOVIET UNION AGREED TO THE FORMATION OF A WORKING GROUP TO CONDUCT FURTHER DISCUSSIONS. THE FIRST MEETING OF THIS GROUP WILL TAKE PLACE DURING JUNE IN MOSCOW.

4. WE BELIEVE THE US AND THE SOVIET UNION HAVE A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO ATTEMPT TO REACH AN AGREEMENT ON THIS QUESTION. NO PROGRESS CAN BE MADE UNLESS BOTH THE US AND THE SOVIET UNION ARE READY TO ENTER INTO DISCUSSIONS WHICH ARE BASED ON CANDOR AND AN AGREEMENT THAT NEITHER SIDE SHOULD GAIN AN ADVANTAGE. WE ARE AWARE OF THE DESIRE OF THE LITTORAL STATES THAT THE AREA SHOULD BE FREE OF GREAT POWER RIVALRY. WE SHARE THAT GOAL, AND ARE READY TO AGREE TO LIMITATIONS ON US MILITARY ACTIVITIES IF THE SOVIETS WILL ACCEPT EQUIVALENT LIMITATIONS ON THEIR MILITARY ACTIVITIES.

5. ANY ARMS LIMITATION AGREEMENT MUST BE BALANCED AND MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE ACTIVITIES OF BOTH SIDES.

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THE SOVIETS HAVE A LARGER PERMANENT PRESENCE THAN THE US IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. THEIR SHIPS ARE DEPLOYED TO THE AREA FOR VERY LONG PERIODS OF TIME. WHILE IN THE AREA, THEY MAKE USE OF SHORE FACILITIES FOR MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF THEIR VESSELS. THE SOVIETS HAVE AVAILABLE TO THEM IN SOMALIA FACILITIES CAPABLE OF HANDLING AND STORING CRUISE MISSILES FOR THEIR WARSHIPS, A MILITARY COMMUNICATIONS STATION, AN AIRFIELD CAPABLE OF HANDLING ANY AIRCRAFT CURRENTLY IN THE SOVIET INVENTORY. THE USE OF SUCH FACILITIES AS THESE MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IF THE US IS TO ACCEPT LIMITATIONS ON ITS PRESENCE IN THE AREA.

6. IN CONSIDERING ITS POSITION THE US MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE IMPORTANCE OF COINTINUED UNRESTRICTED ACCESS TO THE OIL RESOURCES OF THE PERSIAN GULF. THIS IS A VITAL INTEREST, NOT ONLY FOR THE US, WESTERN EUROPE, AND JAPAN, BUT ALSO FOR INDIA AND OTHER INDUSTRIALIZING NATIONS. AN ARMS CONTROL ARRANGEMENT FOR THE INDIAN

OCEAN NEEDS TO BE BALANCED IN ITS EFFECTS; NOT GIVE ONE PARTY AN ADVANTAGE OVER THE OTHER; AND NOT POSE A THREAT TO THE SECURITY INTERESTS OF ANY NATION.

7. THE ISSUES INVOLVED ARE COMPLEX AND WE DO NOT THINK REACHING AGREEMENT WILL BE AN EASY PROCESS. HOWEVER, WE ARE SERIOUSLY INTERESTED IN MAKING PROGRESS AND WE ARE PREPARED TO MAKE A MAJOR EFFORT. WE BELIEVE THAT THE US OBJECTIVE IS ONE WHICH HAS MANY COMMON ELEMENTS WITH THE INTERESTS OF THE LITTORAL STATES.

8. THE US IS AWARE THAT INDIA HAS PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN PAST EFFORTS TO PROMOTE INDIAN OCEAN ARMS LIMITATIONS. WE ARE INTERESTED IN HEARING INDIA'S VIEW OF OUR INITIATIVE AND ITS ASSESSMENT OF THE POSSIBLE REACTION OF THE SOVIET UNION AND LITTORAL STATES. THE US WISHES TO CONTINUE TO CONSULT WITH THE GOI ON THIS QUESTION. WE
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ARE PREPARED TO KEEP THE GOI INFORMED OF THE COURSE OF OUR TALKS WITH THE SOVIETS.

CHRISTOPHER

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NNN

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